

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

All the Year Round

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THROUGH THE RANKS.

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CHAPTER XVII. THE VERDICT.

TAKEN as a regiment, the Hundred and Ninety-Third was passing through a sad and troublous time. There is nothing so depressing to your soldier as the idea of a court-martial. The notion of the irresistible power attached to that organisation is to him overpowering; and all knew that the tribunal ordained to sit in judgement upon Private Harry Deacon was about to assemble. No one underrated the heinousness of the crime that was charged against the accused—attempted murder, with all the cowardly adjuncts of an attack upon a man defenceless and unprepared. But Harry, like many another ne'er-do-well in this world, had been a favourite; and a kind of simple romance hung about him, since all knew of the love borne to him by pretty Norah O'Connor. Would they ever forget the poor lass, hanging about the gate the day that Harry was up at the triangles, and Miss Drew—Heaven bless the sweet name of her!—comforting her as best she could? Ah, but Harry had never done much good since then; it broke the heart of him—and he was such a one for a glass, and got led away. In truth, they were as tender over him as they could be, handling his sin gently, and treating it as something he was hardly responsible for, at the time, being what you may call "out of himself."

The older soldiers took the matter in more solemn form, knowing that the very

foundations of regimental security were shattered by such crimes. But all—young and old—were full of regret and sympathy for the victim. One pean of praise of all the Colour-Sergeant's good qualities, both as a man and a soldier, rose on all sides; and it was like a sudden ray of sunshine running down the ranks, when on parade one cloudy, gusty, autumn morning, the news was set going that the doctor had good hopes of Colour-Sergeant Hubert Smith.

But nothing could comfort Drummer Coghlan.

Private McMurdoch was in the same plight. A batch of new recruits arrived; "chaps with two left legs, an' not a haporth o' sinse amang the lot," and the celebrated dog story was not told to them. These two, Coghlan and McMurdoch, had tried to save the boy Deacon—and had failed.

The two old soldiers were for ever consulting together as to the fate of Deacon; and it was a very serious view they took. Unhappily, what are called military murders had been terribly rife just then, no fewer than four cases having come about in the last six months.

"I dinna like the look o' things," said McMurdoch. "But the Queen—God bless her!—She knows best, and we must abide by what She says."

Coghlan glanced at him sharply out of the corner of his eyes, yet refrained from words; you might twist the young sapling, but not the old gnarled oak. Indeed, why try? McMurdoch's was a loyal and honest creed. It was a life-buoy that kept him afloat in the storm and stress of life's tossing ocean. Who would grudge it him?

"I'd like to see the lad," said Coghlan,

still harping upon poor Deacon ; "he was mad as mad that night—murder-mad too. Shure I fancy I see him standin' all white an' grim by the window, an' his eyes same as a dead man's—fixed an' bright—an' he's down—down—down!" says he in a voice that ran through you like a bayonet ; 'down—down—down !'"

"Whatever had he agen the Colour-Sergeant—a likely mon an' as fine a mon as stood the Hundred and Ninety-Third ? Never an ill word did he speake to no man, and no man speake an ill word of him. But I tell thee Harry was a fiery, jealous-hearted rascal, that was he, an' he thought—he'd a mind to think—that some one meant harm to the girl Norah. I tell thee, Drummer Coghlan, Harry Deacon shot the wrong man."

Shuddering down Coghlan's back like streams of cold water came memories of the night when Deacon played the part of Minnymin, and of the tall swinging figure that crossed the square, the figure that was so like that other. "You're not to be after spakin' the thought that's in your heart, McMurdoock ; we're owld sojers, an' we're good sojers, an' we know our duty," said Coghlan, deeply disturbed, "an' we'd bite our blissed tongues out av us before we'd be spakin' avil av them as be sit over us. Now there's Mullins, whin he wants a thing said that he knows is not what a soldier should say, he gits his wife—daint woman—to say it for him. Then he bla'giards her before folk for sayin' it; but said it is, an' set in the blissid light av day, and him kipt iuonocent-like an' a threue man. But we're neither of us married wid leave—yit—so we have to do our own spakin', bad or good."

"Ah !" chimed in the other, "there's a sight o' fine feelin's has to be smothered up in this world. I wish we could see the lad Harry, if it was but a glink o' his face. He was clean daft when he did the deed, an' I'd like to go before the court an' say so right straight out."

But Coghlan took a sterner view of matters.

"Murder's murder," he said, "an' a rig'ment's a rig'ment."

Then they both shook their heads as if that last argument were conclusive, and a thing that could not be wrestled with.

But all this was before the great news became known. Then, of course, everybody vowed they were not a bit surprised, and all the women said "I told you so;" but nothing else was talked about, and

there was constant discussion of every particular of the strange story of how Colour-Sergeant number one company was a "titled gentleman," and how his father and mother were on their way from England to see him; how two or three orderlies were "kept on telegrafting all day long," in answer to messages of one kind or another; and, strangest of all, how the Colonel and this man's father were old friends and school-fellows. Never in the memory of the oldest soldier had there been such a state of excitement and turmoil all through the regiment ! Such a rush of events one after another might well take away the breath of a community, and set it gasping.

The band-boys, talking over Sergeant Smith, said with proud regret, "Weren't he darned pertickler?" and one, reaching forward to the distinction of a future interview, vowed he should "salute that sharp you'd think I'd cut my bloomin' 'ed in two;" but another, more worldly wise, said with contempt of the other's ignorance, "He won't come back to us, bless you, not he. You'll just see 'im going hout in a coach and six, an' ave to squeedge yer back agen the wall to let 'im pass."

Coghlan and McMurdoock took the new departure as a personal insult.

"As I hear," said a young soldier to the former, "Colour-Sergeant number one company has turned out to be a livin' lord."

"He was precious near after bein' a dead one," replied Coghlan.

"An' a livin' dog's better than a died lord," put in McMurdoock. "You attend to your drill, my lad, an' one o' these days they may make a soldier of you; that's enoo' for you to think of, and leave ither folk to mind their ain business."

"He was mighty well as he was, and I'm wontherin' why they wanted to change him, an' spoil as fine a non-commissioned officer as iver stripped behint a company—bad cess to them !" growled Coghlan, and McMurdoock again added his quota.

"He was a guid mon, if they'd a let him be, an' I'm not goin' to credit as Harry Deacon had a grudge against him; it's all a mistake, somehow, an' the puir lad was daft wi' drink an' folly."

In both these speeches the plural pronoun was mysterious. Maybe "they" stood for circumstances. It soon got to be known that an interview had taken place between the victim and the would-be murderer. No one had seen the culprit

taken to or from the hospital; but the news very quickly got about. Very few particulars were known, for the two or three present on the occasion were dumb; but it was said that the Hospital Sergeant looked subsequently upset, and this small detail in itself spoke volumes as to the agitating nature of the occasion. It was as if one had spoken of a granite boulder being disturbed in its mountain fastnesses.

Another particular that leaked out was the fact that Harry Deacon had been led out from the presence of the man whose life he had striven to take, blinded by tears, and shaking with sobs like a woman. Those who saw this sight said they wished they might never see such another. At that time the balance hung perilously between life and death for the Colour-Sergeant. The swords still stabbed his labouring breast with every breath he drew, and sometimes he seemed to pass into that borderland that lies between time and eternity, where dreams and realities get mingled together in inextricable confusion. Yet even through the mists, as a lark's song pierces the grey on a cloudy day, came the echo of Alison's song :

The King of Love my Shepherd is.

The King of Love—of mercy—of reconciliation. The thought beat its high and holy lesson into the man's dazed brain. Forgive—forgive—forgive! even as you hope to be forgiven.

Hubert Claverdon—it is well to give him his right name now—had a wild and stormy past to look back upon. Not, perhaps, a very black one, as the world counts blackness, but dark enough to have caused the mother who idolised him to weep her eyes dim, and his father to turn from him as from some stranger.

He had burnt his boats, cut himself free from the old life and all its ties. If he came to be wept over as dead, better than than wept over as worthless. His sins would be forgotten and forgiven; the heart of the mother would cherish only the sweet and tender memories of his boyhood—the loving clasp of little arms about her neck; the fond, if noisy, greeting of the school-boy home for the holidays; the little birthday gift he bought for her with pardonable pride, its truest value the love that dictated it. She would forget the darker shadows of his young manhood; she would blot out even their traces with her gentle tears. And so, as many a world-stained man has done before

him, he sought salvation through the ranks, and he had found it, not only in the life of discipline, but still more fully in an absorbing and apparently perfectly hopeless love. Love that has for its object a noble woman, and is without hope, is tried as by a refiner's fire, and is more spiritual than of the earth. Love had taught Hubert Claverdon some of the highest and purest lessons of life; it was teaching him the highest of all now—that of the duty of full and free forgiveness of wrong.

"As God is my witness I had no grudge against you," said Deacon, cowering away from the sight of the changed face, the labouring breast of his victim. "I did the deed in a moment of madness. I would have given my own life to undo it, as I dropped my rifle on the stones and saw you lying there on your face. I had done it a hundred times in my dreams—a hundred, hundred times."

"What harm had I done you?" asked the Sergeant, wonder growing in his sunken eyes; then, even this plaint seemed to take the form of a flaw in the fulness and freeness of pardon, and he sighed as he said, wearily turning his head: "Never mind, it is all over now, and whatever comes—you and I part—friends."

The manacled hands could not touch that feeble one upon the coverlet, but the impulse to do so was betrayed by the faint clink of the chain between Deacon's wrists.

We who know the ins and outs of this story are well aware that the likeness in figure and gait between Colour-Sergeant and Adjutant was the secret of this tragedy; and it so chanced that on the fatal day Ellerton had been detained on duty rather late, and seen going about in uniform and not mufti.

The brain of the would-be murderer was dazed with drink, his heart inflamed with the raging fires of jealousy and hatred, a flame roused to madness by the chance sneer of an acquaintance. Before his eyes was a blood-red mist, and the rifle trembled in his grasp, as from the sheltering shadow of a doorway he took aim at the passing figure, which, leaping high, and flinging up wild arms to the bright sky as if in piteous appeal to Heaven, fell with a sickening thud, face downward on the stones.

It was all the work of a moment—all done in the warmth and glow of the quiet autumn sunshine.

A woman in the married quarters singing her child to sleep, stopped short in her song, crying out to her husband that some one was shot; and in an instant, capless, scarlet-coated figures leapt and ran, and strong hands tearing the still smoking rifle from the murderer's hand, held him in fierce grip, with hoarse and smothered execrations in their throats.

It was such a little time ago, and yet, how long ago it seemed now, to those most nearly connected with it!

Surely for a lifetime had Norah taken her daily way to the little chapel where the red light burned so steadily—pitilessly it seemed to her—and there besought dear Heaven for the life of the sin-stained man she loved!

Father John watched her with a tender, yearning pity that was still helpless to comfort. As he said his early mass, he prayed that the great Comforter who can comfort so much better and more surely than man, might at length—however far off in the future—console the sorrow that was too deep for human hand to touch or heal. In all his holy, simple life, he had never known such a grief. Terrible knowledge, too, was locked within his troubled breast. To him the identity of the man Private Deacon of the Hundred and Ninety-Third Regiment intended to kill was no mystery. Thankful indeed was the good old priest that he did not know the name and status of that man. Enough, and more than enough, he knew to account for the black sin of murder attempted on that sunny day, whose brightness and beauty was marred by a terrible tragedy. Silence was now his duty to the girl whose name would be bandied about as that of some wanton, were the truth known—nay, not the truth in very truth, but that garbled version of it which would soon be set going like some slimy reptile creeping in and out among the throngs of men. For who would believe the pure and perfect innocence of the lowly-born and simple maid? What he could say—the good father who knew every secret of her heart—would go for naught. The child of his tenderness and his prayers would be flouted by the world that is ever so ready to be cruel to a woman; her name would be made a jest and by-word of among those who were not worthy to tie the little ribbon of her pretty shoe.

Norah's good name must be protected and held sacred; but the good old man

set his sparse teeth—and, maybe, wished the power were his to utter a strong, expressive word or two—when he thought of the man who had escaped scot-free, and of the man, innocent of all wrong, who now lay doing grievous battle with death. It will be seen that Captain Ellerton's sins and shortcomings took a deeper hue in the eyes of Father John than they would have taken in those of the average man of the world. Still, even the priest fully recognised the entire absence of any justification of Deacon's crime, and the reasonableness of the old decree, a life for a life.

There is, we know, a very narrow line between the vehemence of the passions of hatred and revenge, and the exaltation of madness. The brain of a man excited alike by strong drink, and the whirl of a raging anger, is like a horse that the rider's hand cannot guide or control. The lust to kill—terrible child of unrestrained passion—was the demon that had wrought such ill, blighting poor Norah's life and love for ever. Hardly less eagerly than those about the injured man's bed, did Father John hunger for news of his state, long and pray that life might win, and cruel death might lose. Day in and day out his venerable figure made its appearance at the big gates leading into the square, as with gentle persistency he asked for news from the hospital. Once when the doctor's verdict was a little more hopeful, the old man bared his grey head as he listened, the soldiers about the gate wondering all the while, and smiling one to the other.

But of all this Father John saw nothing. Was not Norah waiting at the turn of the road—the little shawl upon her head pulled low about her face, and from the shadow her great eyes, larger now from the hollows that tears had worn about them, gazing, weary, sad, eager, haggard in their misery, for the coming of the dark figure, the bearer of news, which in her simple heart she took to mean her Harry's life or death?

The first time that the news was that of a shadow of hope, the old man almost trotted in his eagerness to carry it quickly, and the people, hurriedly getting out of his way, crossed themselves, as a sort of set-off against having very nearly run up against the "holy paste."

How great was the joy of two hearts as he and Norah met that day! How she cried out in her gladness as she had never

done in her pain ; and what a homely pathos gathered about the two figures as, bending slightly towards each other in their eager speech, they went with quickened footsteps, not home to the shanty by which the pigeons cooed so loudly in a glint of fitful sunshine, but on to the little chapel on the hill.

Simple, grateful hearts, with thoughts tending ever heavenwards, who would not wish you well, even though your faith be not theirs, nor ever could be ?

At length came the all-important day when the President of the coming Court-Martial arrived in due state.

A tall soldierly man, with grey, almost white hair, cut close even for a man in the service, long grey moustache, and shaggy eyebrows, from beneath which peered a pair of keen dark eyes, keen and bright as steel.

"There's a pair of 'em," said an appreciative sentry, on the sly, after having duly saluted. " Soldiers hevery hinch of 'em—darn 'em ! " this last ejaculation carrying the meaning of an unbounded admiration.

After that day a strange stillness fell upon the regiment. It was the stillness of expectation ; the brooding gloom and silence that would be presently cleft by the sudden shaft of the lightning.

Men hung about the doors of the quarters in groups, speaking in hushed voices. Was not the dread tribunal sitting ? Was it not also needful that any man who had ever been within miles of a Court-Martial should recount to every other man as many particulars as he could remember, and a great many that he could not ? Mounted officers, members of the staff of the General commanding the district, gay with trappings, and jangling with chains, and swords, and spurs, came clanking in at the gateway, having ridden their horses into lather, as if their country's weal depended on their speed. These were watched with awe and great interest by groups of women and children assembled at the corners of the married quarters.

The man who, lying on his cot enjoying the flavour of the pipe of peace, had seen, framed in the opening of the doorway, the picture of a scarlet-coated figure that leapt high, and then, with lifted arms, fell prone, had to give his evidence, and came out from the ordeal looking as though he had tried to commit the murder himself. McMurdoch, white through all his bronze, awaited his turn with a would-be courageous air that deceived no one. When the

summons came at last, he stood up jerkily, gasped out his one article of faith, and then, as it were, surrendered to fate, saying, "Lead me forth !" as if instant execution awaited him, and he were determined to meet death as a soldier should. Alas ! his evidence proved the act to have been premeditated, not the hot impulse of a mad moment ; and the President, stroking his moustache in a fiercely aggressive manner, said something in a low tone to the man next him. It came about in this way : there had been far too many military murders of late ; one most terrible, one in which two lives—those of the Colonel and Adjutant—had been sacrificed ; it was necessary to take some drastic and decided step ; in a word, to make an example.

McMurdoch, shrunk, shivering, his head drooping on his breast, in truth a wreck, had to be supported between two sympathising comrades to the canteen, and words were muttered, quickly growing into a strong electric thrill, that ran through the regiment from end to end.

A week later the verdict was made known.

Sentence of death had been passed upon Private Harry Deacon, of Her Majesty's Hundred and Ninety-Third regiment of foot, for the attempted murder of Colour-Sergeant Hubert Smith, of the same corps, and the condemned man was to be handed over to the civil authorities for the due carrying out of the sentence.

LABOUR BUREAUX

THERE has just been issued by the Labour Department of the Board of Trade an extremely interesting blue-book, which contains the Report on Agencies and Methods for Dealing with the Unemployed—genuine unemployed, men who are willing to work if any work can be found for them. England, as, indeed, is the case with almost all other countries, is in the throes of the Unemployed Question—how to provide work when the supply of workers is apparently constantly growing, and fast leaving behind the demand—and, under these circumstances, an official report, which contains all information as to the numbers of unemployed and their various trades, and as to the organisations for their assistance, cannot fail to be both opportune and helpful. It is peculiarly opportune at the season of the year when a greater number of workers are out of employment than at other times ;

and helpful inasmuch as it teaches us much about a subject which is always cropping up, and about which most of us have but a vague and general idea.

The general scope of the enquiry dealt with in this blue-book, had reference "to questions of irregularity of employment and the evils caused thereby, i.e. to the extent and causes of such irregularity, and to efforts made in various ways to deal with distress and other evils resulting from want of work."

What this article intends to put before its readers is the work done by Labour Bureaux which have been set up in various localities to bring those in want of labourers in contact with those who desire work, and vice versa, and that, too, without any of that pauperisation which must attend the efforts of charitable societies. These latter, good enough in their way, very often are necessarily round-about in their working, and in addition to providing work when they can, give money when they cannot provide work. The latter is not what the genuine unemployed prefers; it is work he wants, and not charity.

Of course, in classifying permanent agencies for the relief of the workless, the Poor Law comes first, but this does not deal with want of employment only, but with any destitution; and, moreover, under the Poor Law there can be no payment for work done in the shape of wages. After the Poor Law come the various voluntary agencies, of which the Charity Organisation Society takes first place; then several permanent voluntary agencies are highly developed, and deal with the relief of distress, including that arising from want of employment. Next come temporary agencies for relief, such as schemes for providing work by municipalities or temporary voluntary agencies; and then we have agencies for providing work for special classes, such as discharged soldiers, while the various Trade Unions, of course, to some extent act as vast Labour Bureaux.

This brings us down to the portion of the report with which we have more particularly to deal. Labour Bureaux do not as yet play a very important part in England; but there is no reason why, properly worked, they should not be very much increased. During last winter the Labour Department of the Board of Trade received information as to only twenty-five Labour Bureaux, fifteen being temporary, while

the remaining ten are more or less permanent. These ten are at Egham, Ipswich, Chelsea, Battersea, St. Pancras, Camberwell, Westminster, Bloomsbury, Wolverhampton, and Salford. It will be noticed that the majority are in London, the idea not appearing to have caught on in the large provincial towns. Also it will be seen that the small town of Egham is placed first, the Bureau at that place, indeed, being the pioneer in England. The temporary registries, for the most part, were started in exceptional times of distress by London Vestries and the local authorities. The report considers that in the case of permanent Bureaux there are two classes to be considered: those Bureaux which accept all applications for registration, and those which make some enquiry as to the applicants. The conclusion seems to be rather in favour of the first class, for employers would be more apt to use the Bureaux if the fact of registration carried proof of some capability for work on the part of the man registered.

The Egham Bureau, being the pioneer, is entitled to first description as to its working, and the result of that working. It was established in February, 1885, and the work connected with it is voluntary. It is made known by cards posted about the district and advertisements in the country papers, and is open to local residents, but if there is any vacancy for which a local man is not available, an outsider may have the chance of the work. In the register are the following particulars of each applicant: name, address, date, description of occupation required, when last employed, how long employed, applicant's remarks, date when employment is found and by whom. The registrar is only authorised to register bona fide workmen out of employment. There is no charge for registration, but those who obtain work by this means are invited to contribute threepence a week during the first few weeks of their engagement. This agreement, however, is entirely voluntary, and one of the first rules of the registry is "that the registrar shall scrupulously refrain from interference in any question of wages or condition of service, or labour troubles." For this reason men are not supplied to fill the places of men on strike, and in the register no notice is taken of membership of a Trade Union or of wage. An important factor to the success of this Bureau lies, no doubt, in the fact that the superintendent knows personally most of the

applicants, both employers and workers. The following are some statistics as to what was done by the Egham Labour Bureau from October, 1891, to December, 1892. Out of four farm labourers who applied, three were placed in situations; thirty-four out of forty-two gardeners were provided for; twenty-four out of thirty-five bricklayers; one out of two masons; forty-nine out of sixty-two carpenters and joiners; five out of nine plumbers; thirty out of forty-five painters; eighteen out of twenty-one stablemen, horsemen, etc.; ninety-three out of one hundred and sixteen general labourers; three men-servants, watchmen, and attendants; twenty-one boys out of thirty-two; eight charwomen, etc., out of eleven. This gives a grand total of two hundred and eighty-nine successful applications out of three hundred and eighty-two, which is certainly not a bad proportion.

Next in seniority is the Ipswich Labour Bureau, where the forms and registers are more elaborate than those of Egham. Additional questions are asked as to whether the applicant is married or single, what have been his average wages, and the cause of his leaving his last situation. In addition a certificate is required from the applicant's last employer to certify that the workman is competent, stating how long he employed him, and that his character and conduct were satisfactory. Here the management is in the hands of the honorary manager, who, however, would like to see the work taken over by the Municipality, and similar institutions established all over England, and federated together so as to "facilitate the circulation of labour." Registration is free, and the Bureau is neutral in trade disputes. The report gives as the reason for the success of this Bureau, "the energy expended by the manager in finding situations for workmen, and workmen for employers. He does not merely register applications and wait for corresponding offers, but actively exerts himself to find suitable employers or workmen, as the case may be." From October, 1891, to December, 1892, the total number of applicants was four hundred and fifty-eight, and of these one hundred and fifty obtained permanent and one hundred and forty-one temporary situations. The largest item consisted of ninety-two general labourers, for whom seventy-three situations were found; while out of twenty-six menservants, watchmen, and attendants, only five were provided for.

At Wolverhampton the Bureau was

started in connection with relief organisation works, which were formed to deal with distress in the town caused by scarcity of employment. At the beginning all applicants were registered, but soon it was found necessary to make an alteration, and it was decided "that only those applicants should be placed upon the register who could show that their being out of work was due to no fault of their own." But in Wolverhampton the Bureau was not a success—in contradistinction to Egham and Ipswich—and not more than twenty applicants had, at the time the Report was drawn up, been placed in situations through its agency.

The bureau at Salford was started as a temporary affair to deal with exceptional distress, but has continued and seems to have become permanent. In addition to the questions asked by the Egham Bureau, the applicant is asked here his length of residence in the borough and his physical condition. The number of situations compared with the number of applicants does not show anything like such good results as the Egham and Ipswich Bureaux; out of one thousand four hundred and fifty-six applicants, only two hundred and ninety-five were placed, but out of those applicants two hundred and seventy-three are said to have been registered before the Bureau was taken over by the Corporation. A weekly fly-leaf is published with particulars of the Bureau and employment required. The fly-leaf for one week sets forth that the Corporation has decided to continue the Bureau as a Labour Exchange for the borough, and expresses hopes that the Exchange will "prove an invaluable means of speedy communication between employers and unemployed." Continuing, the Committee ask for applications to the Bureau from those who need labour, whether skilled or unskilled, and say that they, the Committee, will do their best to "assure themselves of the fitness, both as to character and ability, of those whom they recommend for any situation, and they will strictly confine their operations to residents in the borough." This certainly seems like the proper way of going to work. Particulars are given as to how and where application is to be made, and as to what men are on the list, and ends with results up to date—the period included being twenty-nine weeks, and the results showing that, out of one thousand seven hundred and twenty-eight applicants, eight hundred and sixty-two were dealt

with as follows: employment was afforded by private employers to three hundred and thirty-three; by the Salford Corporation to one hundred and ninety; two hundred and five registrations were cancelled; temporary employment was found for seventy-eight; and fifty-six removals were cancelled. Indeed, Salford seems a very good specimen of what can be done by Labour Bureaux in large towns.

From Salford we come to London, where the most important Labour Bureau is that at Chelsea, which is worked by a committee of the Vestry, and was founded in October, 1891. All applicants must be resident in the parish; the details asked being the same as at other Bureaux; registration is free, but—and this seems a new departure—every man must re-register every seven days if he is still out of employment. And here, too, is another difference. Although the superintendent has general orders to work in harmony with trades organisation, "the Vestry have not officially laid down the principle that men are not to be sent to take the place of strikers." This principle, it will be remembered, is one of the fundamental principles of the Bureaux previously described, and seems to be very necessary for the insurance of smooth working. During the year 1892, three thousand four hundred and two people were registered, and employment was found for one thousand six hundred and forty-nine. Of these six hundred and sixty-eight were domestic servants, two hundred and ninety charwomen, one hundred and fifty boys, one hundred and twenty-one labourers, while the remaining four hundred and twenty men and women may be described as various. It will be noticed that the number of women here is somewhat large. The St. Pancras, Battersea, and Camberwell Bureaux were started first as temporary arrangements, but have been carried on and appear to be now permanent. They are run on much the same lines as the Chelsea Bureau, and a detailed description would be mere repetition.

Such are the permanent Bureaux reported to the Board of Trade. What the Committee has to say about them is simple enough. As a first essential to success it considers some form of selection necessary, or employers will not use the Bureaux, and this selection is, of course, more difficult in large towns than in a small place like Egham; secondly, it does not think that the Bureau should be in any way a relief agency; and thirdly, it is of opinion that

the Bureaux should steer clear of trade disputes by declining to supply men in the place of strikers, or, on the other hand, to register the names of strikers.

This article does not propose to describe the various temporary relief works started by municipalities and other local bodies, nor the French system of Labour Bureaux, for they would not be of much good to us as Labour Exchanges, but it may be interesting to glance at what has been done in our colonies. An account of what has been done in New Zealand we find in the reports of the Bureau of Industries presented to both Houses of the General Assembly. The Bureau was established in June, 1891. "The objects desired by the Government were the compilation of statistics concerning the condition of labour generally; the establishment of agencies for reporting the scarcity or overplus of workers in particular districts; the transfer of such workers from overcrowded localities to places needing labour; and, generally, the control of all industries for the physical and moral benefit of those engaged therein." This is a pretty inclusive and sweeping programme, but one which, after all, should be the real object of Labour Bureaux. Two hundred agencies were established, and the superintendents of these agencies had to forward every month a list with particulars as to unemployed persons in their districts, and make report as to various works, private and public, in their locality needing more workmen. The applicants are registered as in the English Bureaux, and if they have to go far for their work they are assisted by railway passes, "in some cases given free to those seeking work for themselves, but given to those proceeding to engagements only as advances, orders on the employers against future wages being signed by the men. Most of these advances on future pay are honoured when matured." Again, as in England, every effort is made to ascertain the bona fides of the applicants. The number assisted to employment from June, 1891, to May, 1892, was two thousand nine hundred and seventy-four, two thousand of whom were found work by private employers, while the others were drafted on to public works, which have played, as there is room for them to play in big colonies, an important part. This New Zealand report goes on to gravely consider the classification of employment of the poorer members of society. It considers that the dependent classes should be divided into

three distinct classes: the helpful poor, who only need guidance and direction to enable the work and the workers to be brought together; the helpless poor, who are to be regarded as subjects for benevolent aid; and the criminally lazy poor, who should be compelled to work, if necessary, under restriction—a wonderfully good division if it could be accomplished. The first division, of course, is the one which would benefit from the working of Labour Bureaux, but this New Zealand agency confesses that its present attitude is only a "confession of weakness and of inability to grapple with fast converging difficulties."

In Victoria the system was tried, but the Government, in 1893, being forced to take to public works, and suffering tremendous Labour troubles in consequence, decided that the Bureau was an encumbrance, and on the twenty-second of May it was abolished. The Government of New South Wales opened a Bureau in February, 1892, and during one year no fewer than fifteen thousand seven hundred and seventy-nine persons were registered, of which number eight thousand one hundred and fifty-four found employment. In Queensland a Bureau was started in 1886, with branches, and during the last year four thousand two hundred and thirty persons out of seven thousand and thirty-three registered were found employment.

This closes the list of existing and successful Labour Bureaux, and before concluding, an account of the Annual Report of the Egham Bureau may not be uninteresting as showing the inner working of this mode of dealing with the Labour Question. Of course, the whole question is much too large to be dealt with here, and it must be understood that this Bureau forms only one of the many methods of dealing with the question. Now the Egham managers, having had longer experience, have greater weight; and their superintendent was examined before the Royal Commission on Labour, which fact is put forward in the report, and they go on to say: "It may be well to emphasize again the definite and obvious value of registries or employment agencies in country districts, as distinguished from their use in urban or populous neighbourhoods. In the country, employers are scattered, and the waste of a haphazard tramp for work is much more serious than in towns, and involves often a break-up of

the worker's home." They go on to point out that the mere establishment of registries alone cannot evolve any fresh work, and that the registry can only flourish when it enjoys the confidence both of employers and employed. The publications of the Emigrants' Information Office, which contain information as to emigration, are sent to the Bureau; but the registry has not yet been able to offer any facilities for emigrants. An interesting item in the report is the total result of cost and employment procured for eight years. This is as follows: In 1885, one hundred and eighty-one applicants were provided for out of two hundred and twenty-three, at a cost of seven pounds nine shillings and twopence; in 1886, three hundred and seven men and eighteen boys out of three hundred and twenty-five applicants, at a cost of seven pounds eighteen shillings and twopence; in 1887, two hundred and sixty-nine men and twenty-two boys out of three hundred and sixty-nine, for nine pounds nine shillings and sixpence; in 1888, two hundred and two men and eighteen boys out of two hundred and eighty-nine, at a cost of nine pounds thirteen shillings; down to 1892, when two hundred and sixty-eight men and twenty-one boys out of three hundred and eighty-two applicants cost twelve pounds eighteen shillings and tenpence. This is a very low cost of working, which is another reason for the success of this Bureau.

The text generally comes first, but here it appears at the end of our article, and the text is taken from a note at the top of the Annual Report of the "Egham Free Registry for the Unemployed." The note is to the effect that the registrar is constantly receiving applications as to information of how the registry is worked, to facilitate the formation of other local registries, and proceeds to give advice—one being a repetition of the secret of the success of the Ipswich Bureau, the necessity of selecting a competent, earnest, and impartial registrar, possessing business aptitude and a kindly interest in the success of his efforts to obtain employment for those entered in his book.

But the next note is the text wanted: "It is hoped that ultimately an organisation of local Free Labour Registries in country districts for the Unemployed, affiliated to county towns, and focussed at a metropolitan office, may be placed in correspondence with similar organisations in the Colonies and throughout the British

Empire. It is hoped, also, that in course of time local Registries may be associated with eleemosynary and Benefit Societies, at least as far as regards able-bodied men and lads who are receiving the assistance of such societies, and who are eligible for entry on the registrar's list."

That is the point: a large system of associated Bureaux working in communication with each other throughout the country and the Colonies, not small local bodies standing alone and being able to do good only in their own district. And who should work such a system? Is it right and fair for the work to be left in many instances entirely to private enterprise, with no help and little encouragement from any public bodies? The manager of the Ipswich Bureau is hopeful that the work may be taken over by the Corporation. So might it be for each local branch, but if ever the dream of an "affiliated system of Labour Bureaux at home and in the Colonies" comes to pass, surely it will have to be, not under private enterprise or municipal protection, but a great national movement worked by the Government.

One little point suggests itself in conclusion. Surely there must be some English word which would express the idea quite as well as the foreign "Bureau."

A SKETCH IN MINNESOTA.

THE beautiful State of Minnesota is the special harvest-land of the Western world, and the lavish wealth of waving corn which glorifies the brilliant landscape resembles a sunset sea, rolling in shining billows to the blue rim of the distant horizon. As the ripened ears sway in the summer breeze, the amber waves deepen into orange, and brighten into red where buckwheat glows in the sun, or maize swings ruddy tassels amid feathery leaves. Tawny wheat pales into the gold of drooping oats, and the creamy tints of barley or rye on upland slopes, "white unto harvest," complete the scale of colour. Leagues of golden light and glancing shadow reveal the riches of the virgin soil whereon Nature pours her precious gifts in bounteous profusion, treasures old as the human race, and unchanged even in this Western clime. The harvests of the earth have been called "the golden links which unite the ages and the zones, making of the earth one great home, and of the human race one

great family." It is a curious fact that corn has never been known as anything but a cultivated plant; it cannot grow spontaneously, and is never self-sown, or self-diffused. A supernatural origin is ascribed to it in the mythologies of all ancient nations, and even the roving Indian of the American prairies speaks of the stately maize as "Mondamin," "the Spirit's Grain." Primitive types of all other esculent plants are scattered through the various quarters of the globe, but original types of the corn-plants are not to be found, and the grains of wheat taken from Egyptian tombs erected before the birth of history, are identical with the seed sown to-day. As we look upon the fair North-Western landscape teeming with the harvest gold which forms the truest wealth of earth, the beautiful idea of a famous German botanist seems especially applicable to the scene before us: "With corn is connected rest, peace, and domestic happiness of which the wandering savage knows nothing; harvest implies possession, imposes labour and restraint, and rivets the links of social life."

The great cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis, once ten miles apart, but now virtually united, have attained their present status through the cereal wealth of these prairie lands; the machine factories of St. Paul, and the flour-mills of Minneapolis, though the largest in the United States, scarcely meeting the requirements of the ever-increasing tract of country cleared and cultivated in the great North-West. Even the picturesque Falls of St. Anthony, at the head of the Mississippi, have been sacrificed to the prosaic task of turning gigantic mills, and the fettered torrent, imprisoned within a network of wheels, dams, and sluices, has been changed from a romantic cascade to a manufacturing "water-power." The twin cities, busy, populous, and thriving, but destitute of all interest save that produced by the almighty dollar, suggest only the inevitable prose of life, which predominates until the social chaos rounds into form, and the comparative leisure of a settled condition permits the graces of existence to take root in congenial soil.

We soon exchange the busy hives of commerce for the sunny shores of Lake Minnetonka, encircled by a shining girdle of corn, wherein three miniature lakes are set like emeralds in a golden frame. The white tents of summer camping parties border these placid pools; fairy canoes

lie at the water's edge; a girl in blue swings in a scarlet hammock beneath the dark boughs of a lofty hemlock, while another fair maiden in white sits on a mossy log, fishing-rod in hand. Beyond the outlying mere the broad blue mirror of Lake Minnetonka reflects the evening sun. Picturesque waterside houses with wooden balconies mantled in crimson masses of Virginia creeper stud the velvet lawns of the curving coast, where intending passengers signal from tiny quays to the gaily-decorated steamer which plies on the winding lake. Painted skiffs flit across the water; flags wave on rocky knolls; and merry crowds dance in the open air, where bands are playing amid Chinese lanterns and Venetian masts. A ring of light twinkles round the shore, but on the dark and lonely borders of the Upper Lake, reached by a pine-clad channel, Nature is left to her own sweet will, and the murmuring water plashing on the rocks alone breaks the spell of silence and solitude. Fireflies illumine the dim recesses of dusky glades with galaxies of sparkling stars, and dance above the yellow corn which sweeps up to the black belt of shadowy trees. The vicinity of forest scenery to the centres of population is a special charm of Minnesota; Nature in the West conducts her operations on so vast a scale that the efforts of man seem only to tear the fringe of her garment, and from the great American continent we still receive impressions of a world newly created and radiant with the morning dew of youth.

The wild-looking Indians who stride along the streets of St. Paul and Minneapolis link the present with the past, but every year the red man recedes further into his native wilds, with a deepening distrust of his American conquerors which often breaks out in fierce rebellion against the ever-narrowing limitations of Indian liberty. Primitive ox-waggons, with huge wooden wheels, creak through the twin cities, bringing the produce of Red River prairies to the flour-mills, but civilisation advances so rapidly that every memento of a harder life and a ruder age is fast disappearing.

On the banks of the River Ste. Croix, a northern tributary of the mighty Mississippi, the primeval beauty of untrammeled nature is enhanced by the pageantry of the American "fall," which dyes hill and dale in matchless colouring. The little steamer starts from the rude settlement of Stillwater, a place of infinite possibilities in

that future which seems so strangely near to the energetic Western States. The weird scream of saw-mills fills the air with the monotonous sound which blends harmoniously with all rustic surroundings; reaping machines whizz and whirr on sunny slopes bright with the uniform gold of a ripened harvest. The glassy stream contracts between rugged cliffs at the mouth of the deep glen cleft by the winding waters, and the forest-crowned rocks burn with the transfiguring radiance of the transatlantic autumn. Huckleberry bushes flame along the shores, and coral clusters of mountain ash berries gleam from bronze and purple foliage. Graceful birches kiss the water with drooping boughs of burnished gold, and rose-flushed sugar maples deepen into scarlet where an early frost has touched their topmost branches. Crimson sassafras and plum-coloured sumach mingle feathery sprays, and butternut trees lift pyramids of saffron foliage towards the blue arch of heaven. The golden globes of the tasteless Osage orange shine like lamps amid the dark green boughs, and the russet hues of spreading oaks throw the brilliant foreground into high relief, though their indented leaves already brighten with faint reflections from the riotous colour of a landscape painted with the richest tints of Nature's palette. Carmine brambles drape the rocks, and the hickory displays a dazzling canopy of amethyst and amber, the tender tones melting into each other when a breeze rustles the variegated leaves. Only the black spruce and grey-green cedars retain their unchanged monotony of sober colouring, and relieve the dazzling splendour of the gorgeous woods. Here and there a lateral valley breaks away into the blue heart of distant hills, and brings a tributary stream to swell the current of the romantic Ste. Croix; the suggestive glimpse into an unknown region adding the touch of glamour and mystery without which the fairest scene lacks poetic charm. Quaint ferry-boats, constructed after the fashion of childhood's Noah's Ark, cross the tranquil tide, and countless rafts float downstream, steered by lumbermen in blue shirts, red caps and trousers. Beyond the secluded vale of Ogeola the boat rounds the sweeping curve of Cedar Bend, where the hoary branches of the interlacing trees form a grey roof overhead which shelters us from the sun. Green islets stud the dimpling river rushing in a clear brown flood over the pebbly bed, or

darkening into shadowy pools where the plunge of an otter breaks the motionless calm into a ring of whirling eddies as he vanishes into depths of gloom. The forest trees blaze with jewelled lustre in the sunset light, and as sudden darkness falls in the shade of towering cliffs, a torch at the bows illuminates the perpendicular walls of black rock known as the Dallees of Wisconsin and Minnesota, the river at this point dividing the two States.

On emerging from the dusky gorge into a placid sheet of moonlit water, the day's journey ends at a moss-grown quay, and we follow a mysterious lantern, held by an invisible guide, up a rocky path beneath overhanging boughs to a rustic inn, like a green nest set in a bower of leaves. In the dewy freshness of the September dawn, we follow the windings of the river to the rapids, a mile beyond the tiny hamlet of log-huts clustering round the primitive hostelry. Clouds of white vapour veil the water, and the slanting sunbeams deepen the pink and scarlet maple-trees into hectic brilliancy. Through tangled vines and across broken rocks we make our slow progress, guided by the distant music of the foaming cataract which dashes over black reefs forming a bar across the river, no longer navigable except by canoes carried across the "portage" according to Indian custom, and launched again beyond the tossing breakers.

A stiff climb up slippery boulders discloses a score of natural wells, excavated by the action of fire, water, or ice, in some prehistoric age, but we fail to obtain definite information from the non-scientific inhabitants of this primitive region. Our queries as to which of the great elementary forces produced the phenomena are sternly suppressed by the lanky youth who escorts us.

"I guess it don't much matter," is his contemptuous reply to our enquiry. "The wells is there, and what more do you want?"

After this severe rebuke to our unholy curiosity, we silently retrace our steps to the little inn, where a rustic feast of fish from the river and berries from the woods awaits us in the vine-covered verandah.

The lumber trade is in full swing during our downward course, and the steamer with difficulty threads the narrow channels between huge masses of floating timber which in spring render these waters impassable. Sometimes we jolt over a yielding raft, notwithstanding the execrations

of the lumberman, who with the aid of his steering pole springs to a place of safety on another heap of drifting logs, which creak and bend with the sudden impetus of his substantial weight as it almost submerges the slight construction. The lot of these lumbermen is one of toil and danger, but their strong arms and sturdy hearts are the pillars of many a thriving State, and the return of the backwoodsmen from the winter camp when the waters break their icy chain, and the first rafts float down on the brimming flood, wins a welcome warm as that which greets the sailor after a perilous voyage. The healthy freedom of a life cradled in the lap of Nature often gives an unconscious dignity to these rude settlers in the deep recesses of North-Western woods, which retain their primeval silence and repose in a continent which has become a synonym for social upheaval and perpetual unrest.

The Ste. Croix river was discovered and named by the devoted Jesuit missionaries who were the pioneers of Christian civilisation, planting the standard of the Cross on these unknown shores, and suffering untold hardships, torture, and even death in their noble efforts to bring the wandering Indians into the fold of the Church. The rapids which hasten the velocity of the impetuous river render it the principal "lumber-stream" of Minnesota. The buoyant atmosphere is an elixir of health, and the cheery songs of the lumbermen echoing through the frosty stillness add a bright touch of human life to the enchanting scenery. Amid the tumbled rocks of a romantic glen south of the Ste. Croix, the famous Falls of Minnehaha, the "Laughing Waters" of Indian folk-lore, gleam through the gnarled and knotted boughs of giant oaks. Here in the former "Land of the Dakotahs," Hiawatha, the mighty Indian chieftain, immortalised by the legends of all North-Western tribes, wooed and won the Arrowmaker's daughter, whose musical name was borrowed from the waterfall which blended its harmonious voice with every experience of her forest life in the wigwam on the torrent's brink. Indian traditions personify the forces of Nature to an extent which causes extreme difficulty in tracing any story to an authentic source. A complete narrative resembling a literal statement of actual events often proves a mere sequence of poetic images describing familiar scenery, or an attempt to translate the wandering voices of Nature into articulate language.

The facts of individual life are occasionally combined with mystic dreams or fancies, and a blending of reality with romance seems probable in the story of Minnehaha, who suggests herself to modern thought as the spirit of the waterfall, an Indian Undine, through whose waking soul the perpetual melody of the torrent speaks in varying tones.

Though legend and fall are alike profaned by an approach through a tea-garden—"more Americano"—incongruous surroundings cease at the wicket-gate opening into the rocky glen, where overhanging cliffs and leafy shadows exclude the glare of day. Through the green twilight of the branching oaks a path fringed with purple asters and plumy fern skirts the swift stream, which shoots smoothly over a granite precipice. Rockets of silver spray dart from the clear darkness of a gleaming flood, interlaced by ribbons of snowy foam. Shadow and sunshine flicker across the flashing fall from a tremulous screen of fluttering leaves, and a shimmering rainbow dances on a wreath of pearly mist tossed in mid-air by the wild mirth of the Laughing Water, as it leaps down the rocky ridge, and rushes headlong down the glen to lose itself among the dark shadows of the ferny glades. Though the spell of enchantment remains unbroken, all traces of Indian occupation have vanished from the spot consecrated by the beautiful love-story of the Algonquin chief and the daughter of the waterfall. In the dim depths of the darkening glen, the music of the fall growing fainter in the distance recalls the vague misgivings of Minnehaha's girlish heart, as she followed her Indian lover through the slumberous pine forests which separated the Arrowmaker's wigwam from the chieftain's lodge on the shores of "The Big Sea Water." Only when the song of the waterfall ceased to stir the natural regrets for the lost home of childhood, did the haunting fears of the unknown future die away, though after famine and fever had wreaked their cruel will upon the red man's bride, she heard the Falls of Minnehaha calling her once more ere she closed her eyes in death.

Whispering leaves tell their secrets to the rippling water; blue-bird and robin flutter in their nests, and twitter sleepily from the green heart of the solemn woods; but the soft stir of bird and branch only emphasizes the dreamy hush of the memory-haunted glen, and the swift-falling American night at length recalls us from

poetry to prose. As we ascend the rocky steps a tribe of youthful settlers encircles the English visitors to these Western wilds, and the eager curiosity displayed would suffice to celebrate an arrival from some unknown planet. Our ages, occupations, and social status are enquired into with exhaustive scrutiny; our ideas and motives are overhauled and commented on with startling candour; and after a run through the gamut of our very insignificant accomplishments, the severe young critics pounce upon a victim who has inadvertently confessed to "playing the piano," and she is summarily escorted to an inner sanctum of a log cabin in the distance, where she evokes unearthly groans from a battered harmonium which has come to end its days with this irrepressible Western family. The little conversational and musical interlude is cut short by the arrival of the train which carries us to the starting-point of the Mississippi steamer, a two days' passage down the great river completing our experiences of Minnesota.

The atmosphere of gloom and mystery which surrounds the "Father of Waters," seems the only note of sadness amid the joyous life of these harvest lands. Though the first narrow reaches of the river sparkle between the grey rocks and branching oaks which diversify the undulating plains of wheat and maize, the dancing waters soon widen into a turbid flood flowing stealthily through woods of dull green cotton-trees along the swampy shores. Great turtles bask in the sun on steaming mud-banks which choke the sluggish current; blue mists of fever dim the green luxuriance of the rank vegetation which suggests decay rather than life. Pallid flowers gleam in the lush grass of the marshy undergrowth, where the black cypresses are strangled in the matted tendrils of Virginia creeper and wild grape-vine, which rope the pillared stems and mantle every bush of wild orange, laurel, and bay, with tangled sprays of green and crimson. Still bayous, black as night beneath heavy foliage and climbing parasites, pierce the green depths of malarial swamps, where stagnant pools, whitened with the marble cups of a world of water-lilles, vary the mournful monotony of the lonely river. Trailing mosses wave funereal garlands from forest trees, and pelicans wade in the still lagoons from whence the devious back-waters extend like a network in every direction.

The difficult navigation of the dangerous

river is successfully accomplished by the pilot immortalised in the pages of Mark Twain, an honour which seems to have made but a slight impression on the rugged personality of this North-Western celebrity, a sturdy backwoodsman, with red beard, shrewd gray eyes, and laconic speech.

Numerous Indian traditions and ghostly legends of early French settlers cling to the haunted shores of the mysterious Mississippi. * The native dread of the terrible fever which lurks in the rich vegetation of the swamps, finds a poetical expression in the beautiful myth of Lilinau, the Indian maiden wooed by a phantom, who whispered through the evening breeze as it moaned among the pines of her father's lodge in the hush of twilight. Powerless to resist her lover's voice, Lilinau rose from her couch of birchen boughs and followed him into the mazy woods, guided by the waving green plume which was the only visible sign of his presence. Never again did the lost girl return to her tribe, who mourned her as one lured to her destruction by the magic spell of the fatal forest.

The origin of the legend is evident—the balmy breath of the flower-laden air mingling with the aroma of the pines, the green boughs waving in the wind with beckoning arms, and the Indian girl, with her untutored fancy and innate longings for the free forest life, unable to withstand these influences of Nature, which proved stronger than the ties of kindred. As the moon rises above the black walls of cypress, and the tremulous rays gleam whitely on the pools beneath the moss-wreathed boughs, the old French legend which peoples the scene with ghosts of unchristened children fitting round the shore on moonlit nights, also finds a natural solution. The solitary lives of the early settlers rendered them especially sensitive to the aspects and voices of Nature, which reached them with an intensity unmodified by any influences from the outside world of men.

As the deepening hush of night falls over the river, the multitudinous life of the forest awakes from sleep. Owls hoot from the tall tree-tops, snakes rustle through the long grass, and stealthy feet glide through the mysterious pathways between bush and brier. Wings flutter amid the whispering leaves, and a melancholy howl followed by a frightened cry suggests that some beast of prey has fallen into the clutches of a foe.

The oppressive gloom of the scenery renders the termination of the little voyage a welcome relief as the steamer anchors under the lee of a tall grey cliff, and we look back for the last time on the mighty river which has borne us away from the radiant woods and sunlit waterfalls, the blue lakes and golden corn-fields of fair and fertile Minnesota.

NOCTURNE.

TENDER touches of twilight are over the evening skies,
And the lingering glow in the west is waning to primrose pale,
As the rose-red blush on the ripple of cloud flushes fainter and dies,
And the lilac mists are weaving the woof of the young night's bridal veil.

For the eyes of the stars look down in a liquid languor of love,
And the murmur of earth is hushed in a rapture of breathless bliss,
As the stillness below is o'erflowed by the luminous stillness above,
And heaven and earth are melted in one, in the long-drawn twilight kiss.

A FROSTY FLIRTATION.

A COMPLETE STORY.

QUEBEC was smothered in snow. Two feet deep it rested on the high slanting roofs, from which the gabled windows peered out like the eyes of snowy owls blinking at the sunshine. Along the steep streets of the Upper Town a narrow path was dug out next the houses, but driving in the middle of the road up and down over the drifts one could catch glimpses of interiors through the second storey windows.

"There will be good sleighing for Christmas," observed my sister Bessie, as we two picked our steps down slippery Fabrique into narrow, sociable John Street, where the surplus snow was being carted away with true Canadian deliberation.

"Yes," I replied. "And tobogganing, too. We do not often have it so early in the season."

"I've been so long abroad in the balmy air of Ontario that I'd forgotten what your climate was like down here."

"That's the result of spending your Christmas holidays always with school friends, instead of coming home; but now that you are here for good, you'll have to be resigned to losing sight of the plank side-walks one half of the year."

"They are not so beautiful at any time that I pine to see them," laughed Bessie, "while the snow is lovely. Just look at that drift!"

The miniature Alpine range which blocked one of the side streets, was made doubly interesting at that moment by the attempt of a good-looking young man to rescue his hat from one of the hollows, without venturing boldly into the chilly mass. The keen wind rumpled his hair and blew the cape of his overcoat above his head, but he preserved his equanimity, and finally captured the truant on the end of his stick.

"Who is he?" asked my young sister, making an excuse to pause and look in the corner shop-window, though it was no day for standing. "Not a Quebecer, certainly, or he would not be wearing a stiff hat in December."

"Do come on," I said sharply. "One would think you'd never seen a strange man in town before."

"Neither I have, at this time of year," she replied, as we hurried forward. "And you cannot deny that young men are always a rare and highly-valued commodity in this part of the globe, for there isn't one who would stay here if he had enough enterprise to go anywhere else."

This was meant to be a severe hit at me, because I happen to be engaged to one of the said unenterprising youths, and, as in duty bound, I retorted :

"No wonder young men will not stay in Quebec, where there is no chance for any but Frenchmen. They have the advantage in everything."

"And why shouldn't they?" cried Bess, contradictory as usual. "They are in the majority here, and nowhere else in the Dominion, and they are just the brake we need on our wheels. Had it not been for them we'd have rolled over into Yankee-doodledom long ago. And see how picturesque they are!"

And, indeed, the scene which met us when we passed through St. John's Gate might have formed a subject for Gustave Doré. The market-slope was crowded with steaming men and horses, sleds filled with frozen meat, vegetables carefully covered with quilts. The stinging air and bright sunshine acted like an intoxicant upon the people, and it was not without difficulty, though they were politeness itself, that we pushed our way through the volatile, gesticulating groups to the market building.

Our purchases made, we returned by the St. Louis Gate, past the Esplanade, already lively with children sliding down the steep bank next the ramparts, and into

St. Louis Street, bordered by high stone dwellings close on the street.

"So different from the cheerful red-brick galleries and gardens of Toronto," Bessie said.

Our house is in one of the many irregular rows whose roofs might serve as stairs up to Cape Diamond. It would not take a great stride to cross the streets as well, stepping from one tinned roof to another.

Like all the rest, number thirty-six is plain and bare outside, especially in winter when the double door is on, and the shutters are exchanged for double windows; but indoors there was the essence of comfort that blustering afternoon. Bessie and I sat before the grate fire, hard at work over some embroidery which we wished to finish before Christmas, then only a few weeks distant. I can never talk when I am sewing, but Bessie's fingers flew no faster than her tongue, as she discoursed on the delights of the ball at the Citadel the night before, with whom she had danced, and what each partner had said to her and she to him. Sisters are proverbially unappreciative, but I could not help noticing what a pretty picture she made, sitting in that low chair, with the bright silks in her lap lighting up her dark red cashmere. Her cheeks were flushed with bending over her work, and the flame of the fire drew sparkles from her brown eyes, and showed streaks of gold in the dark Pompadour puff of hair above her forehead. I could quite understand how it was that she had been the belle of Murray Bay last summer, and how during this, her first winter at home from school, she had captivated the few eligible young men in Quebec. Her lips curled mischievously away from the shining regular teeth as she remarked to me :

"And that ridiculous Alf Stephens! I wish you had seen how he positively sulked, because I would not give him more than one waltz. But Captain Bouchard is simply charming, my dear. He and I——"

I had barely time to put out of sight the handkerchief on which I was working his initials, when the door opened to admit my young man—the only one I ever had, or desire to have—and towering behind him came the hero of the snow-drift, whom he introduced as a second cousin from England. Bess was demureness itself in a moment, and our new acquaintance bade fair to be an exception to the general rule, for he took little notice of

her, seemed to consider her merely a schoolgirl, and addressed most of his remarks to me. Bessie talked to my Jack, and after they had gone she said :

" What do you suppose that la-de-dah is out here for ? "

" If you mean Mr. Lowndes," I replied severely, " I'm sure I don't know."

" He is going to write a series of articles for an English magazine on Canadian life and manners, if you please."

" Well, are you hoping he'll put you in ? "

" Not exactly. I am far beneath the notice of the Lord High Executioner. You are far more likely to be on the little list, Kate—second-cousin-in-law elect ! "

" Nonsense ! I believe Jack was cramming you ! "

" He doesn't try that with me, Katy dear. Perhaps he was not in earnest either when he proposed that we should get up a sliding party for to-morrow night to initiate our fair friend."

Fair he certainly was, and fairer still he looked in a borrowed white blanket suit when he and Jack called for us the next evening. The devoted Alf Stephens turned up, too, to escort Bessie, and Mr. Lowndes fell to the lot of Miss Burton, almost as tall as himself and a decided Anglo-maniac.

As usual some youngsters invited themselves to be of the party, and going out Louis Street, they found amusement in rattling the toboggans this way and that over the hard trodden snow, trying to trip up some unwary urchin.

Miss Burton did not see why people let so many wretched boys come sliding with them, and Mr. Lowndes also confessed to imperfect vision in that particular.

" Just as if he'd never been a boy himself !" exclaimed Bess indignantly, and she tore ahead of Mr. Stephens to join the juveniles in a snow skirmish. Truly, my sister's young-ladyism is put on but thinly as yet.

A bright moonlight night is sure to bring plenty of sliders to the Cove fields, and by the time we reached them there was a steady stream of toboggans careering down the long uneven slope. Jack's is a large, hospitable one, and for the first slide, Mr. Lowndes, Bess, and I tucked ourselves upon it, while Jack steered with a foot out behind.

Mr. Lowndes said it reminded him of sailing with a stiff breeze. Now we are in a trough of the sea, now up again over the crest of a wave, now catching our breath as we dive down a steep place,

and letting it go again as we glide over more even surface. The frozen spray flies up in our faces as we breast these snow-white billows, but the level haven is reached at last, our gallant pilot having steered us safely past that most dangerous of reefs—a board fence.

The length of the ascent depends entirely upon the companion. Bessie did not appear to find it tedious, though she chanced to be next to Mr. Lowndes. Jack and I were in front, and heard what they said.

" Is it true," she asked, " that you have come out here to take notes upon our habits and manners, so that you may write about them when you go home ? "

" Who has been so kind as to enlighten you concerning my intentions, Miss Garland ? " he replied, rather stiffly, I thought.

" Oh ! Isn't that what all talented young Englishmen cross the ocean for ? They cannot find sufficient food for their gigantic intellects at home."

" You have been misinformed, I assure you," and then he said something about the "heir of all the ages" which I did not catch, but only too well did I hear my pert sister's reply.

" Yes, I think that will do very nicely, Mr. Lowndes—not exactly for an opening sentence, you know, but a little way on. And you must be sure to mention in a foot-note for the benefit of Canadian readers—for of course your articles will be in great demand out here—that the gentleman Tennyson quoted above is at present poet laureate of England."

" That will hardly be necessary, I fancy. Even the schoolgirls seem to be remarkably well-informed."

" Alas ! they are the only learned class among us ; but your book may perhaps be too light for them. It is we older people who need relaxation in our leisure—"

" Suppose, then, we relax a little now by taking a slide together ! "

" Can you steer ? "

" I think so. Your young brother Jim gave me some private lessons this morning, and I think at the present moment he prefers a sled which goes faster, so I'll borrow his toboggan."

Jim's toboggan is a narrow one, and holds only two, so that Mr. Lowndes had an excuse for asking but one young lady to go down with him, but Bessie had no excuse for constantly being that one young lady. Though Alf Stephens had brought her there, she did not grace his toboggan

once, nor did she slide with one of her other friends, having eyes and ears for the Englishman alone.

It was maddening to have to tear ourselves away just when the moon was at its height, and the scene like fairyland, but Miss Barton expected us at her home for cake and coffee. There Mr. Lowndes and Bessie found a sofa as limited in dimensions as Jim's toboggan, but I took care to hover near and catch the drift of their conversation, in case my young sister should be going too far.

"Do you really think so?" she was saying, gazing up at him apparently with all her soul in her eyes.

"I do indeed," he said, equally earnest.

"But the style—"

"Thank goodness!" I said to myself. "She is on a literary topic." But I was undeceived.

"What's style?" he replied. "Colour is everything! That blue blanket suit looks simply nowhere beside your adorable red one."

"They're getting on," thought I. "Poor young man! What a shame it will be if he takes a broken heart back to England with him along with his notes on Canada!"

During the next fortnight we had Mr. Lowndes for breakfast, Mr. Lowndes for dinner, Mr. Lowndes for tea. When he was not with us in the flesh Bessie talked incessantly about him, giving us the benefit of their conversations. But two or three days before Christmas there came a sudden change in the wind. Jack's cousin came to take her driving to Lorette. She refused to go. He expected to meet her at the rink. She was not there—Bessie, who was never known to miss a band night all the winter! Her avoidance of him became as marked as her preference had been.

On Sunday morning he joined us as we were taking our customary promenade on the Terrace after church. If there had been any breeze it would have been bitterly cold, for the thermometer stood at twenty degrees below zero; but the air was perfectly still, and we sunned ourselves on the narrow path cleared next the railing. As we walked along facing the Citadel we could not see over the high bank of snow on our right, but to the left we had glimpses of the roofs of Lower Town in their spotless winter headgear. There was not room for more than two to walk abreast, so Jack fell back with me, and Mr. Lowndes joined Bessie in front.

"Isn't it amusing to see Bess on her

dignity?" said Mr. Cowan to me. "Look how extremely amiable she is!"

"I am so sorry, Jack, that something has come between her and your cousin, for he is an exceedingly nice young fellow, and I never knew her to go so steadily with any one young man before."

"No, she generally likes to have three or four on a string."

"He is really above the average, though, and I used to think his very imperturbability attracted her."

"And I suppose, like all engaged girls, you had turned matchmaker, and were wondering how it would feel to have a married sister living in England."

"Kate," called Bessie from the central kiosk, "do come here a minute and enjoy the view. It is better than all the sermons in the world. Do you suppose the ice-bridge is going to take?"

"I am afraid it has taken," remarked Mr. Lowndes enigmatically, as he turned to me, while Bess walked over to the railing and gazed down at Mont Ste. Anne and the fine line of hills to the left of it, as if she had never seen them before.

"I hope, Mr. Lowndes," said I, "that you will put in a good word for poor old Quebec in your papers. Upper Canadians and Montrealers speak contemptuously of it as a dead-alive sort of place, and the American tourists treat it as a kind of old curiosity shop."

"I think I am fully alive to the attractions of your city," he replied in an absent kind of way, gazing over at Bessie. "What's the matter with her?"

"Oh, nothing! It is just one of her freaks to appear injured. I should pay no attention to it, if I were you."

But it was difficult for the most gentlemanly man to remain passive when her animosity took a more active turn. At a dance on the Monday night she carried on a desperate flirtation with one of the B Battery officers. I would have been satisfied had she continued to leave Mr. Lowndes severely alone, but that unfortunate young man could not open his lips in her hearing without being snubbed. Let us hope he attributed her eccentricities to her native climate, which exhibited all kinds of weather during the next few days. First came a thaw, and then a freeze, giving us brilliant hopes of skating on the river Christmas Day.

Tuesday the twenty-fourth, we were out at St. Matthew's Church, helping to decorate. Mr. Lowndes came too, and

worked with a will, but never a smile did he get from Bessie. I heard her reply to his offer to help her nail up some evergreens :

"No, thank you, Mr. Lowndes, I much prefer doing it myself. Canadian girls are independent, if they are not particularly ladylike."

He looked puzzled, but said nothing. In the evening we took a turn down town to see the stores lighted up, and the crowds doing their Christmas shopping. It was a lovely night when we started, but a regular blizzard set in before long and blew us home. There we found Mr. Lowndes, who said he had come to say "Good-bye."

"Going away on Christmas Eve," I cried. "That is dreadful! Can you not stay till the end of the week?"

"Sorry, but I have to meet some friends who will be arriving out from England."

"But the steamer is never in before Sunday at this season."

"Not often, but it is the 'Parisian' this week, and she may be earlier. Besides, I'd like to have a day or two in Halifax before they come."

He rose to go.

"We shall miss you so much," said I, turning to Bessie, who did not unbend in the least.

"Pleased to have met you, Mr. Lowndes," she said in her iciest tones. "And I hope your impressions will be as favourable everywhere you go."

"I do not expect to take on any deeper ones," he replied, smiling down at her, while her face remained as rigid as the picture of any saint in the Basilica.

"When do you start?" I enquired.

"I thought of crossing to Point Levis to-night, and taking the train for Halifax in the morning."

"To-night!" I exclaimed. "You can't get across to-night. The ice-bridge has only just taken, and the Grand Trunk Ferry will not break it up till to-morrow."

"All the more reason I should go now, if I can get a carter to risk it. I have a great desire to cross the river on the ice."

"It is nonsense to talk of driving over. That would not be possible for a week yet, even if the Ferry stopped running—and have you any idea what a storm is on?"

"Why don't you walk across?" said Bess, striking in. "If you are in such a hurry to shake the snow of Quebec off your feet, that will be the surest way."

"Indeed, Miss Bessie, to tell the truth,

I am most anxious to skate over, and therefore sent my luggage across this morning."

"Well, you will surely not let a little snow stop you."

"Bessie!" I cried, "how ridiculous you are! Just see what a storm there is."

I went to the window and peered into the night. The electric light showed the flakes driving swiftly past into the darkness. When I turned round, Mr. Lowndes was standing close to Bess, who with blazing cheeks and eyes had taken up a defiant attitude upon the hearth-rug. For once the Englishman's serenity seemed slightly ruffled, but evidently he made no impression on my sister, for he was saying :

"Well, I'll risk it, since you—"

He broke off suddenly, and with a hurried farewell to me, in three minutes he was out of the house, and I was upstairs shaking Bessie. It took me some time to shake the truth out of her, but it came at last.

"Do you remember that day we drove to the Falls?"

"Yes, you went with Mr. Lowndes, and slid with no one else all afternoon."

"I didn't do it any more."

"And why, pray?"

"Just as we were leaving the hotel I found a half-sheet of scribbling-paper filled with writing in pencil. I knew in a minute it was some of his notes, and I thought I'd get hold of a sentence or two just to tease him about, so I kept the paper and read it when I came home."

"A very honourable proceeding, I must say."

"Now, don't interrupt me, Kate. Wait till I tell you what he said. There was a little about Canadian scenery, and then he went on to speak of the people. He said the 'girls' were not at all stiff and proper, like English young ladies, but very easy to get acquainted with, and very kind indeed to stray Englishmen. He could guarantee any of his countrymen a hearty welcome out here, for the 'girls' entirely looked down upon the native youths whenever a stranger appeared. Then there was something about our free-and-easy manners, which he said were very nice for a change, though, of course, they would not be tolerated for an hour in England. Now, considering that I am the only Canadian girl he has seen much of, don't you think I have reason to be angry?"

"Perhaps, but after all there is some truth—"

"That's enough, Kate. I might have known I'd get no sympathy from you. That is why I did not show you the wretched thing."

Here my young sister, being considerably wrought up, ended the discussion in the orthodox fashion by "bursting into tears."

A ring at the door-bell, late as it was.

"Where's Lowndes?" I heard from Jack's voice in the hall, and I called over the stair.

"He said he was going to skate over to Point Levis to-night. Do you suppose he'd do it?"

"Not unless he's crazy. The ice-bridge is sure to go before morning. I'll go and look him up, and come back and tell you if he's all right. Bessie is anxious, I've no doubt."

Jack did not come back, and true enough Bessie did grow anxious. She could not sleep, but lay tossing about, saying at intervals:

"Do you think he really cared for what I said? Do you think he would go on the river to-night?"

When daylight came, I climbed to our attic window, from which we can see the river, and sure enough there was the dark green running water bearing down masses of floating ice on its surface.

Bessie and I could not look at each other during breakfast. It was not a "Merry Christmas" for us, but we went off to church, and exchanged greetings mechanically with our friends after service.

"Too bad the ice didn't hold," said Miss Burton. "We had planned to go skating this afternoon."

"It would hardly have been safe, anyway," said I, glancing over the people coming out, and wondering what in the world had become of Jack.

"I saw some boys on it yesterday," remarked Alf Stephens.

"Did you?" cried Bess, overwhelming the young man with so sudden an interest in anything he had to say. "Then perhaps it was safe to cross."

"Hardly; I noticed that they kept pretty close to shore."

The brightness died out of Bessie's face again. Seldom had the walk home seemed so long, though we made great haste, for I said:

"Surely Jack will be there."

But he was not, and Jim, being despatched to his boarding-house, brought back word that he had not been seen there since the previous afternoon. Jim had a

newspaper, too, which he tried to shove farther out of sight in his jacket-pocket, but Bessie detected him and captured the sheet. It was a French one, but this is the English of what stared us in the face:

"FROZEN TO DEATH."

"It is greatly feared that a foolhardy young Englishman who tried to cross to Point Levis last night, on foot, was carried down by the ice-bridge, which broke up at the turn of the tide, about midnight. He has not been heard of at the Grand Trunk Depôt, where his baggage was checked to go by the morning train, so that he could not have got across before the river opened."

Bessie clutched my arm in terror.

"Oh, Kate, I can't believe it! He never would be so silly! Whatever shall I do, if it's true!"

I soothed her as well as I could, though there was a great fear at my own heart. Taunting words from one he loves are enough to make the wisest man foolish.

"But Jack—" I said. "What has become of Jack? He has gone to look after him, perhaps, and is afraid to come to tell us—"

"Right you are, Miss Katherine," said a familiar voice at the door, and in marched Jack Cowan, and behind him the Englishman, looking rather sheepish.

"Merry Christmas!" said John. "We heard of a notice in the paper, and so thought we'd better call early. What's the matter with Bess?" catching her hand as she tried to escape from the room.

"Neuralgia. Couldn't sleep for it," was her prompt reply.

"Then you didn't try to cross the river?" I managed to gasp.

"No," said Jack, who seemed to have constituted himself spokesman. "It was so cold and slippery going down Mountain Hill, that, like a sensible man, he changed his mind and turned back to the hotel. There I found him, and we had a smoke together, and got talking so that I forgot all about having promised to come back here. It was so late when we adjourned, that Lowndes persuaded me to turn in with him, and we over-slept ourselves this morning. I hear that my landlady has been circulating a report that I, too, must have been carried down by the ice."

"But the newspaper notice," said Jim, who felt responsible for his share in the excitement.

"Lowndes didn't take the carter into his confidence."

"What carter?"

"The one who took his luggage over, sonny. He told him he was going to skate across, and forgot to notify him that he had changed his mind. One of that carter's fourteen brothers is a newspaper reporter. See it?"

Meanwhile, Bessie was handing to Mr. Lowndes a closely written scrap of paper, saying :

"I think this belongs to you."

"Indeed, it does not, Miss Bessie."

"Why, I thought it was some of your notes."

I hardly recognised her voice, it was so meek.

"Notes for what?"

"The articles you are writing, of course."

"I never wrote an article in my life, and I never intend to."

"But you said—"

"But you said, and it wasn't polite to contradict a lady."

"Jack, you rascal," I exclaimed, seizing him and the paper, and bearing them off into the back room, leaving Bess and Mr. Lowndes free to make an Anglo-Canadian compact. "That is your writing!"

"I'm not ashamed of it," said Mr. Cowan, smoothing his moustache. "I thought it would be a good joke on Bess, and teach her not to be either too nice or too nasty to strangers in future."

When they were gone, Bessie came and sat at my feet on the stool, gazing into the fire, and smiling to herself.

"Well," said I, "when is Mr. Lowndes coming back?"

"How should I know?"

"Don't be stupid, dear, but confide in me."

"I haven't anything to confide. Whether Mr. Lowndes comes back at all or not will depend, I should say, upon Mrs. Lowndes."

"His mother?"

"No, his wife. These people whom he is going to meet at Halifax are the girl he is engaged to and her father. The marriage is to take place at once."

"My poor Bessie! How long have you known this?"

"Why, Jack told me the first day he brought him to call, and Mr. Lowndes has talked to me a great deal about the young lady. I thought it would be no fun if you knew too."

Just wait till I see that Jack Cowan!

THE GREY BOY.

A SHORT SERIAL STORY.

CHAPTER X.

IT was the end of January. Leila and Dolores, no longer confined to the grounds, were able to go for walks and drives. After the severe weather, a sudden thaw set in, and it was possible to make long excursions into the surrounding country. Leila, still treated with every consideration, had her own horse to ride, and she and Dolores had many a good scamper across the country. But for one drawback they were always happier out of doors. Dolores, so familiar had they become, scarcely noticed them now: except occasionally to lament the want of society of children of her own age, whom they met when out walking or driving: but Leila had not yet grown accustomed to the rude stares of curiosity or the blank gaze of cold ignoring, which met them wherever they went. But there was always Dolores and that beloved invalid, who wrote with such tender gratitude of the help Leila sent her out of her handsome salary.

One day she met an old acquaintance. It was none other than the kindly station-master.

He looked depressed and worried, but his face brightened as she stopped to speak to him. They had a little talk, during which a piece of information came out which brought the prettiest colour in the world to Leila's cheek, and filled her with mingled happiness and dismay. The station-master betrayed the real truth of the tea at the station.

"And Dr. Burton cut the cake and bread-and-butter with his own hands, and my missus has often laughed since at the way he walked off with that big basket, and how particular he was you should have everything of the very nicest and best. He would have one of the best tea-cups. But he's always a kind gentleman; it's a pity more ain't like him," with a heavy sigh. And then, full of his disappointment, he told her how he had just come from Moorlands, where he had been to see Hesketh Anson about the farm his nephew was to have had, and how Hesketh Anson had let it to another man, because he could pay a higher rent and put more money into it.

"But he's that hard and grasping, Mr. Hesketh Anson," he said. "His brother is a different sort; but he leaves every-

thing in the hands of Mr. Hesketh, and he drives many a hard bargain. And they do say that Mrs. Anson lets the money run through her fingers like water, dressing up as she does—and no use neither, seeing no one ever sees her—but perhaps that's the only pleasure she has," bitterly. "They say she thinks of nothing else."

Leila could not forget that little act of kindness on Dr. Burton's part. She and Dolores often met him when they were out, and he always stopped to speak to them. His practice, which was still but a poor and struggling one, was widely scattered among the poorer people of the sparsely inhabited neighbourhood. As yet, there seemed little prospect of his attaining to a county practice, though those who said it most emphatically scarcely knew the young man. Hesketh Anson never attempted to warn her against his acquaintance.

Leila was unconscious herself, as yet, how much happiness and comfort this pleasant acquaintanceship brought into her isolated, friendless life at Moorlands. One afternoon, at the end of January, as she and Dolores were coming home from one of their long country rambles, they caught sight of Mr. Anson with his gun standing on the bank of the lake in the grounds. Neither Dolores nor Leila had seen anything of him for the past week. He had been ill, Martha briefly told Leila; who had learned by this time that, for all their kindly geniality, the negro servants would oppose the blankest taciturnity to any question concerning the family. She noticed, too, that no matter how expansively they chattered to her in their communicative moods, they never by a single chance alluded to any life previous to that they had spent during the last few years in England. How much they knew of the family's past history she never discovered.

Dolores, on catching sight of him, gave a joyous cry and dashed forward. Mr. Anson stooped and kissed Dolores as she ran up to him, and then straightened himself and stared at Leila, a queer smile on his face. She stopped involuntarily. His face was pale, and there was something strange in his smile and the glitter in his eyes.

"Don't move, Miss Mallet," he shouted, "there is a horrible black thing crawling about you. It followed us from Chilli all across the sea! A great slimy snake creature. I can see its tongue quivering

in and out, and yet a moment ago it was only a dry piece of wood. But the devil got into it—the black fellows know how it's done—and it will dart at you in a moment, as it darted at a man before But I'll kill it this time. I'll not be tortured to death in expiation of your life too. Besides, there's no reason for putting you out of our way. Ah! it's getting ready to strike. Stand steady. I'll fire the instant I can get aim. There are hundreds more coming on. Hark how they are rustling among the bushes. Keep still!" He levelled his gun at her. Dolores shrieked, and as Mr. Anson fired a man sprang out from the bushes behind him, striking up the gun, and the bullet hurtled harmlessly just above Leila's head. It was Dr. Burton.

"You madman!" he exclaimed, "another second, and you would have had a second murder on your soul!"

Anson stared stupidly at him, then his eyes blazed into fury.

"D—n you! What do you mean, you crawling, prying sneak?—but if you think you are going to get blackmail—"

"Give me your gun!" said the doctor sternly, looking into Anson's eyes.

Their fury died away under the steady gaze, and Anson slowly yielded up the gun, though an ugly look still lingered on his face. It vanished into an abject, pitiful shame as Dolores, who with Leila had stood white and speechless, caught his hand.

"Oh, what is the matter? Father! are you ill?" clinging to him in terror.

"Ill!" said the doctor, with savage contempt; "he's drunk—dead drunk—as he mostly is. Good Heavens!" turning to Leila, "another second, and the brute would have murdered you. It is delirium tremens, and a bad case at that! Take that child away—your life isn't safe. I'll look after him."

Leila obeyed. She gently drew the child away from her father, who with a dulled, stupid look of misery on his face, stood caressing her hand.

Dolores went without a word. Glancing down at her, Leila was shocked at her pale, stricken face. The real cause of her father's illness was made known to her.

"Oh, Miss Mallet!" The frozen stillness broke into speech at last. "It can't be true! It is so wicked to be that—what Dr. Burton says. Miss Stace, my last governess, told me that people who did that went straight to that place she was so

fond of talking about—perhaps she knew father—“Oh, father, I can’t bear it!” She broke into a storm of weeping. The feet of her beloved were of clay. Leila wished that it had been any one else than Dr. Burton who had broken the news to her, and for the first time she felt a touch of genuine sympathy with the rest of the family, who had tried so tenderly to spare the child the knowledge. And the feeling was deepened by a visit she received from Hesketh Anson that evening after Dolores had gone to bed. It faintly softened even the prejudice she had against him personally, and allowed her to see that that stern-faced young man might have troubles of his own under his uncompromising hardness of self-repression.

Though it was past the usual dinner-hour, he was still in his morning clothes. Probably he had been attending on his brother. He looked thoroughly worn out, and his face seemed to have grown years older. Even she could not doubt the sincerity of his feeling, when he expressed his horror and regret for the peril in which she had been placed.

“My brother is a confirmed drunkard. He has been getting steadily worse, and we have had great difficulty in keeping him within bounds. For the child’s sake”—then with a fierce note—“And but for that brute Burton—I beg your pardon, I forgot he was a friend of yours.” But there was no sneer in the words. He looked almost as if he were sorry for her. “She, as you know, adores her father, and takes things so much to heart, that we were afraid to let her know the truth. But I suppose,” relapsing into wearied listlessness, “it would have had to come out sooner or later; everything is bound to. It’s not much use fighting it any longer.” He rose. “It’s a sinking ship, Miss Mallet,” he said, with a slight smile of intense bitterness. “You had better have taken my advice, and left it.”

She went the last thing that night to see how Dolores was. As she passed the head of the staircase leading from the long corridor down into the hall on her way back to her rooms, she saw Dr. Burton and Hesketh Anson talking together. The two men had apparently just come out of the library, which opened into the hall near the foot of the staircase. In the brilliance of the light that fell from the lamps rising out of the balusters at the foot of the stairs, the young men’s faces were distinctly visible.

They were both very pale, Dr. Burton’s wearing a look she could not understand. That on Hesketh Anson’s was one so full of hate and anger, that her heart was afraid for the sake of the man who had brought it there.

“You have my answer! Do your worst. You’ve tracked down our secret, but you have outwitted yourself. The game’s up as far as we are concerned. As you know so much, you may as well know a little more. There are others greedily watching for this opportunity. It is they who will benefit, not you, by your discovery. My brother’s fortune depends entirely on the secret being kept. Make it public, and the fortune passes into the hands of those who have been patiently watching and waiting for years, for the exposure that was bound to come sooner or later.”

“Mr. Anson,” the doctor tried to speak quietly, “for your own sakes, listen to reason.”

Leila heard no more as she hurried on to her own room, puzzled and sick at heart. What had Dr. Burton to do with the black mystery that seemed to hang over the lives of the occupants of Moorlands?

What was he doing here at this time of night? The great clock in the hall struck out midnight. Then she remembered Mr. Anson. He was probably here in attendance on him, and her heart gave a leap of thankfulness that his protecting presence was so near her. She took off her dress, and slipped on her dressing-gown. She could not go to bed. Nobody seemed to want her services, Martha would not even let her go in to speak to Dolores, and yet she could not help feeling a terrified expectancy that at any moment she might be drawn into the vortex of some dark and dreadful tragedy.

But there was nothing on the surface to suggest such a thought.

The house was perfectly still. The lights were out. Some one had come and put them out in the corridors and passages after she had returned to her room. The silence was almost oppressive. It was a relief to rise at moments from her chair, where she sat by the fire, trying to read, and make a little stir through the death-like stillness. Once she fancied she caught the sound of a horse on the gravelled path beyond the lawn and shrubbery which lay under her window. She rose, and peered out into the darkness, but

could see nothing. She wondered if Mr. Anson were worse, and if they had had to send again for the doctor; or perhaps it was Dr. Burton only just going away. She went back to her seat, feeling lonelier than ever as this possibility struck her. How good he had always shown himself to her! She would have been ashamed to have told any one how often her thoughts went back to that boisterous snowy afternoon in the station, and to the kindly, chivalrous service, prosaic in shape though it was, which he had rendered her, a friendless stranger.

The chimes of the clock played out the hour of two.

She faced her bedroom door, as she sat by her fireside. It was closed, but as the last silvery chimes died away once more into silence, it began stealthily to open.

The long, snaky fingers of a hand curled round the edge of the door, drawing it wide open, and there, against the dark background of the room beyond, stood—the Grey Boy who had haunted the family of the man who had done him so foul a wrong in life? The boy with the horrible hand who had travelled with her in the train, and who had disappeared so strangely at the moment of peril? Or the embodiment of that mystery and fear which seemed to dog the footsteps of the family who now inhabited Moorlands? She sat staring at the creature, scarcely daring to draw her breath.

The boy, in his modern commonplace of everyday dress, with the gruesome fantasy of the charnel-house clinging about it, with his pale, heavy face, and eyes blinking at her as if dazzled by the blaze of light by which she had surrounded herself, his hands—those crawling, murderous hands, with their long, fine fingers—thrust in horrible travesty of boyish fashion in his pockets, stood peering at her; and as he stood there, the same unspeakable dread and loathing fell on her which had touched her once before in the train, and now it was scarcely personal fear, but unutterable horror and repulsion, as if the shadow of some deadly, devilish sin had touched her.

And as she looked into the face that was the face of a boy, but old with an unspeakable wickedness which dated from the days of Cain, it seemed to her as if it took upon it a hideous likeness to the beautiful Mrs. Anson.

Then, with that look of dulled malignity, as if baffled once more by the light that fell about her, the Grey Boy turned away,

and gliding back into the bedroom, drew to the door noiselessly after him.

For a second or two she sat there, unable to stir hand or foot.

Then she sprang up, and catching up a candle from the mantelshelf, she fled out of the room, down the passage leading from the wing with its horrible ghosts of dead and evil things, never stopping till she came out on to the long corridor.

The long corridor, except for the feeble glimmer of her candle about her, lay dark from end to end. All the best bedrooms of the house opened on to it. At the farthest extremity there was an archway, similar to the one by which she had just come, beyond which again passages branched off right and left. She had been once or twice in the right wing of the house, but it was almost entirely unoccupied, Washington and Hezekiah alone occupying rooms in it.

She hurried on to the room occupied by Dolores. Martha always slept in a little ante-chamber leading into it, the child's room again opening into her mother's. The thought flashed through Leila's mind as she cautiously opened the door, how well guarded she always was. The ante-chamber, in which a lamp burned, was empty; a glance at Martha's bed showed that it had not been slept in. She was probably in the farther room. She passed on and entered it. That too was empty. The bedclothes were tossed back, the child's clothes were neatly folded on a chair near, the little shoes stood by the bedside. But Dolores was not there.

Her mother's bedroom was closed and locked, nor was there any answer when she knocked and called, first softly, then more loudly, driven by a desperate desire for the sound of a human voice.

There was only a faint moaning of wind in reply, as if the windows of an empty room stood open to the night air. She went out into the long corridor again, and came face to face with Hesketh Anson. He stared at her as if she were a spirit, in her white wrapper, the candle-light flickering in her wide, frightened eyes.

"Miss Mallet!" Then, with a note of gentlest tenderness: "Why are you up at this hour? There is no need for you to watch in this God-forsaken house!"

"Dolores—where are they all? Dolores isn't in there!"

He scarcely seemed to understand her. He stood looking down at her with the saddest eyes she had ever seen, and in her

dread and excitement she laid her hand on his arm.

"The Grey Boy! He came to my room a few moments ago—and I came to warn them—and there is no one here!"

"Good Heavens!" He seemed to understand at last. "He has been near you again—and Dolores—not here! She has gone to look for her father. And that creature, she might meet him—"

He turned and ran off in the direction of the unused wing. Leila followed him through the archway to the passage beyond. This passage led to a gallery which ran round a second and smaller hall below. Down there, a faint light radiating from a small lamp, which had been set down on one of the lower steps of the staircase, illuminated the darkness. A door leading into the grounds stood open. In the centre of the hall, touched by the uncertain light of the lamp which flickered in the chill current of air that swept in from the open door, and fluttered the child's white nightdress against her little bare feet, stood Dolores. Her face, turned towards the open doorway, was alight with a very passion of love and pitiful, yearning tenderness.

Her father, who seemed to have just come in from the garden, stood there looking back at her.

"Father! Father!" Dolores sprang forward, passing out of the radiance of the

light into the dark shadow in which her father stood.

The two looking down on the scene from the gallery above, had never anything but a confused sense of the scene that followed. As the child ran forward, a figure grey, indistinct, glided out from the deeper gloom of the background and seized her, with its cruel white fingers, round the throat, choking the loving cry into a stifled shriek.

At the same instant Anson flung up his hand, levelling a pistol at the murderous thing. There was one short, sharp crack, followed almost immediately by another, and Mr. Anson fell heavily to the ground, shot dead by his own hand; while the Thing, whatever it was, loosed its hold of Dolores, and staggered away back into the darkness.

Leila and Hesketh Anson, running up a second too late, caught the little white figure as it swayed to and fro, the livid marks of the creature's fingers on the fair round throat.

"I—came—to—tell—father—that—I—asked God in my prayers to-night—"

The faint voice failed, and Dolores lay lifeless on her uncle's breast. Her heart, always weak, had failed under the shock of that moment's anguish of terror.

Yet, so sweet was the smile that dawned on her dead face, that who could say her prayer for the salvation of her father was unanswered?

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